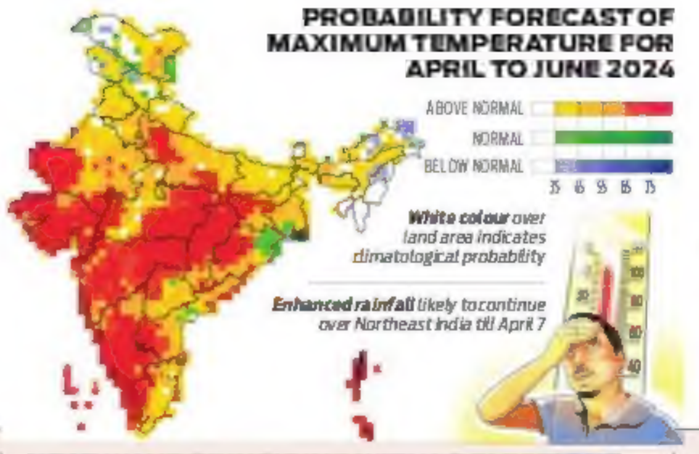
THE NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • TUESDAY • APRIL 02, 2024 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 20 • LATE CITY EDITION


PROBABILITY FORECAST OF MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE FOR APRIL TO JUNE 2024
ABOVE NORMAL
NORMAL
BELOW NORMAL
White colour over land area indicates climatological probability
Enhanced rainfall likely to continue over Northeast India till April 7

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/thenewindianexpress
twitter.com/newindianexpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress

EXTREME HEAT PREDICTED ACROSS THE COUNTRY FROM APRIL TO JUNE

IMD expects Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha, west MP, AP & north Karnataka to be worst affected by the heat wave from April to June

WHEAT CROPS NOT TO FACE BRUNT OF HEAT

Harvest-ready wheat crop may not be impacted by the heat wave. There is no warning for wheat producing states, except Madhya Pradesh, IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said. About 90% of wheat harvest is over in Madhya Pradesh. This year, wheat production is expected to be around 114 million tonnes, according to government data

HEAT WAVE COINCIDING WITH LS ELECTIONS

- Union minister for Earth Sciences Kiren Rijiju said all stakeholders, including state governments, are preparing in advance for the Lok Sabha polls to go smoothly taking into account the heat wave
- El Nino conditions are weakening and La Nina conditions are likely to set in by the second half of monsoon season | P9

150

BIG RESERVOIRS HAVE SEEN STORAGE DROP BELOW 10-YEAR AVERAGE THIS YR

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

In relief for Cong, govt puts off tax recovery till July

I-T dept tells SC that it won't take coercive action against the party till LS polls are over

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

IN a major relief to the Congress, the income tax department on Monday informed the Supreme Court that it would not take any coercive action against the cash-strapped party with regard to tax demands till the Lok Sabha elections are over.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the tax department, made the undertaking before a bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih, which was hearing an appeal by the Congress against a 2016 judgment of the Delhi High Court. In the appeal, the party had moved an interim application seeking a stay of the recent demand notices by the tax department.

"Issues which arise in these appeals are yet to be adjudicated upon. But having regard to the prevailing situation, the department does not wish to precipitate matter inasmuch as no coercive steps shall be taken by the department over the demand of 3500 crores approximately till the next date of hearing," Mehta said.

The SC bench recorded the SG's undertaking and posted the matter to the second week of July for further hearing.

According to the Congress, it has received multiple notices from the tax authorities for a total demand of ₹3,567 crore (including penalties and interest) for discrepancies in income tax returns for previous years. It also accused the BJP government of resorting to 'tax terrorism' to financially cripple the principal opposition party ahead of the crucial Lok Sabha polls.

The unexpected statement by the SG took Congress' counsel senior advocate A M Singhvi by surprise, who acknowledged the gesture as 'gracious'.

"You (Congress) should not perceive negative about someone all the time," Justice Nagarathna orally remarked.

"I am rendered speechless and very few times I am," Singhvi responded.

'LEVEL-PLAYING FIELD'

Congress leader Vivek Tankha, who is also fighting the case for the party before the income tax authorities and the Delhi High Court, said the party can now expect a level-playing field

BK LAKSHMIKANTHA @ Mandya

CONGRESS candidate for Mandya LS seat Venkataramane Gowda aka 'Star' Chandru is one of the richest candidates in Karnataka with assets worth Rs 223 crore.

Congress' Bengaluru Rural candidate DK Suresh has declared assets worth Rs 593.04 crore. Gowda and his wife Kusuma Krishnegowda own eight commercial buildings and nine residential buildings worth Rs 190 crore in Bengaluru. Gowda, 59, is a BSc graduate from Bangalore University. He owns Star Infratech and has declared Rs 29.94 crore worth movable assets, Rs 149 crore worth immovable assets and developed property with a cost of Rs 44.22 crore.

Gowda has only Rs 1.80 lakh in cash and has no jewelry and valuables. He has Rs 29.94 crore in his bank accounts. He has bank loans of Rs 15.66 crore and Rs 15.71 crore.

Gowda owns land worth Rs 99.36 crore, commercial buildings worth Rs 80.72 crore and residential buildings worth Rs 57.03 crore. P4

YATHINDRA GETS EC NOTICE OVER SHAH COMMENT

Mysuru: The Election Commission has served notice to former MLA Yathindra Siddaramaiah for making derogatory remarks against Home Minister Amit Shah. At a Congress workers' meet at Hanur on March 28, Yathindra had called Shah a "gunda". Legislative council members Ravikumar and Chalavadi Narayanaswamy had lodged a compliant with the Election Commission.

'Mysuru Maharaja' doesn't own car, house, has ₹1L cash

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

CONTRARY to expectations of opulent estates and fleet of vehicles, Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, the scion of erstwhile Mysuru royal family, doesn't even have a house, car, or a bike in his name. In his 22-page election affidavit, the BJP candidate for Mysuru-Kodagu LS seat has revealed that he has only ₹1 lakh cash in hand, while his wife has ₹75,000. He has deposits and investments through shares in several companies and trusts, including Bherunda Foundation, Mahisuru Royal Heritage Hotels Palaces, Resorts and Spas Private Ltd., amounting to ₹1.36 crore. P4

CM SAYS EXCISE SCAM ACCUSED VIJAY NAIR HAD LIMITED INTERACTION WITH HIM

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal at a city court in New Delhi on Monday | PTI

Kejriwal evasive, claims ED; sent to Tihar by court

UJWAL JALALI @ New Delhi

DELHI Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was on Monday placed under judicial custody for 15 days by a city court and lodged in Tihar jail.

The order came after the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) custody ended. It did not seek further remand but pressed for Kejriwal's judicial custody in its application. Describing him as a highly influential person, the ED said there is every likelihood that he would influence the witnesses and tamper with evidence if he is released.

Speaking to reporters before entering the court, the chief minister said, "Whatever the prime minister is doing (referring to his arrest) is not good for the country."

The ED's lawyer S V Raju claimed that Kejriwal was not cooperating and was giving evasive replies. "Kejriwal did not also give the passwords of digital devices," Raju said.

In its application for judicial custody, the probe agency cited Kejriwal's claim on Vijay Nair, ex-communications in-charge of the party, to assert that he was evasive and giving misleading replies. Kejriwal claimed he had "limited interaction" with Nair, adding the latter used to report to AAP leaders Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj and not to him.

But the ED said Nair stayed in a Cabinet minister's bungalow and worked from the Camp Office of the CM. "It was also put to the arrestee to explain why would someone who reported to other leaders of the AAP, work from his Camp Office, which anyways is meant for the work of the CM of Delhi and not for the party," the ED said. But Kejriwal claimed he was unaware of who all work at the CM's Camp Office.

During the ED's custody, the CM was confronted with different WhatsApp chats showing the involvement of Nair in the excise policy scam. But Kejriwal questioned the authenticity of the digital evidence shown to him.

Requests special diet, medicines, books

Kejriwal's counsel moved applications seeking permission for the CM to have a special diet, medicines, books and a religious the locket while at Tihar. He sought three books — *Bhagwad Gita*, *Ramayana*, and *How Prime Ministers Decide* by senior journalist Neerja Chowdhury

LODGED IN JAIL 2, ACCESS TO VISITORS TWICE A WK

UJWAL JALALI @ New Delhi

DELHI Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was on Monday lodged at Tihar's Jail No. 2 where 90% of the inmates are convicted criminals. Of the 650-odd inmates in Jail No. 2, nearly 600 have been convicted, well placed sources said.

There are around 650 CCTV cameras in the central jail where Kejriwal has been lodged.

He can watch television — except during designated prison activities — about 18 to 20 channels covering news, entertainment and sports. There will be no specialised services for the CM. He will have to sleep in his barrack either on the floor or a cemented platform.

Technically, Kejriwal is not barred from functioning as CM. But how he would be able to do so remains to be seen as he can have visitors only twice a week.

A former Tihar official said it would be extremely challenging for Kejriwal to run the government from jail. "There needs to be a dedicated support system for the CM. Currently, none of the 16 jails has the necessary infrastructure to accommodate a chief minister's office," he said.

Prison routine

Kejriwal will have to follow the prison routine of breakfast at 7 am for which the menu is tea, biscuit, daliya (porridge) and bread. Lunch around 11 am. From 12 pm to 3 pm, the ward remains closed. Dinner around 6.30 pm usually comprises a dal and one vegetable, roti or rice

26% GROWTH

With ₹13K cr, K'taka ranks 2nd in GST collection

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA'S Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection has crossed Rs 13,000 crore, second only to Maharashtra.

Its impressive 26% growth is the highest among the five largest states.

Karnataka's nearest competitors Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and erstwhile Andhra Pradesh consisting of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, lagged far behind in overall collection and growth percentages.

In GST collection, Karnataka ranks second in the country, next only to Maharashtra with Rs 27,688 crore. However, Maharashtra is double the size of Karnataka.

Gujarat's GST collection stood at Rs 11,392 crore, Tamil Nadu at Rs 11,017 crore and the erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh with Rs 9,481 crore. Andhra Pradesh's case proves the adage that divided they fall.

Experts said that united Andhra Pradesh used to be a more formidable economic force.

Karnataka GST for the year ended March 31 stood at Rs 13,014 crore. The comparison with last year's GST collection, which was only Rs 10,360, showed a steep 26% growth.

Bug invasion: Contaminated water triggers cholera in B'luru

RISHITA KHANNA @ Bengaluru

AMID heat waves and water crisis, cases of cholera triggered by contaminated water have surged by 40% in Bengaluru, as reported by government and private hospitals.

Many private hospitals in the city, which used to record one or two cases of cholera in a month, recorded six to seven cases in less than two weeks in March.

Health experts said people who tested positive for cholera ate food in small eateries. With the city facing a severe water shortage, eateries might have compromised with the quality of water.

Dr Ramesh GH, Head of Emergency and Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute, said, "Consumption of street food such as "panipuri", juice and other items is the reason for such diseases. Contamination of drinking water is another significant factor." P2

EXPRESS READ

Supreme Court notice on full VVPAT slip count

New Delhi: The apex court on Monday issued notices to the Centre and ECI on a plea seeking a complete count of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) slips in polls as opposed to the current practice of verification of only five randomly selected EVMs through VVPAT paper slips. The petition filed by activist Arun Kumar Agrawal challenged the EC's guideline that mandates that VVPAT verification be done sequentially, causing undue delay.

Katchatheevu: Jaishankar blames Nehru, Indira, MK

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

THE BJP on Monday continued to keep the pressure on the Congress and the DMK over the ceding of Katchatheevu in the Palk Strait. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar accused Congress prime ministers Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi of being indifferent towards Tamil Nadu fishermen's rights and giving it away to Sri Lanka.

At a media interaction in the BJP headquarters, Jaishankar said, "For Pandit Nehru, Katchatheevu was a 'little island of no importance'. That's why he considered the Katchatheevu issue a "nuisance' and never wanted the issue being raised on the floor of Parliament again and again." Jaishankar quoted Nehru as having said, "I attach no importance at all to this little island and I would have no hesitation in giving up our claim to it. I don't like matters like this pending indefinitely and being raised again and again in Parliament." As for Indira Gandhi, the island was a little 'rock', he said.

Responding to opposition barbs on the timing of the controversy, he said it is an ongoing issue. The ceding of Katchatheevu has resulted in more than 6,000 Indian fishermen being detained and 1,175 fishing vessels seized by Lanka in the last 20 years.

Taking an aim at DMK, he said Congress had kept the regional party in the loop over giving the island away to Lanka. "The available records exist of the then foreign secretary keeping then TN CM M Karunanidhi fully informed of the talks between the two countries. Ironically, the same people who connived at all this are today standing up and trying to pretend to be champions of fishermen," he charged. P9

CONGRESS POSER

The MEA under the watch of the then foreign secretary, S Jaishankar, said in 2015 in response to a RTI query on Katchatheevu, "This (Agreement) did not involve either acquiring or ceding of territory belonging to India since the area in question had never been demarcated. Under the Agreements, the Island of Katchatheevu lies on the Sri Lankan side of the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line." Is he disowning the 2015 RTI response now, asks Congress leader Jairam Ramesh

Cafe blast: NIA in hot pursuit of conspirator

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

ABDUL Matheen Taha, 30, the fugitive terror accused and allegedly the key conspirator in the Bengaluru cafe blast case, is reportedly at the centre of the conspiracy behind the March 1 IED blast. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) last weekend released photographs and details of the main accused, Mussavir Hussain Shazib, 30, and Taha and also announced Rs 10 lakh reward each for information leading to their arrest. This is the second time that the NIA has announced a bounty on Taha. In May 2020, the central agency announced a reward of Rs 3 lakh on information leading to his arrest in the Al-Hind IS Bengaluru module case (RC-4/2020/NIA/DLI), which is said to be behind the murder of a Hindu leader in Tamil Nadu.

Abdul Matheen Taha

Taha is a graduate and originally from Chitradurga, but he moved from there to stay with his mother, who is from Thirthahalli. According to sources, he was radicalised by a handler, who is suspected to be overseas. "He in turn allegedly radicalised around a dozen Muslim youth from Thirthahalli. Taha is allegedly at the centre of all terrorist activities in Karnataka since 2019, when 'Al Hind IS' - an ISIS-inspired-terror-group was reportedly formed by accused Mehboob Pasha of Bengaluru, Khaja Moideen alias Jalal of Cuddalore, TN, and their associates. The module is said to be involved in the murder of the Hindu leader in Tamil Nadu. Taha has allegedly appeared as the common thread in the subsequent terrorist cases in Karnataka, from the Mangaluru terror graffiti case in November 2020; stabbing of Prem Singh in the communal clashes over the unveiling of a poster of Savarkar in Shivamogga on August 15, 2022; burning of the national flag in September 2022 near the Tungabhadra river and the pressure cooker blast in an autorickshaw in Mangaluru. P5

Karnataka ranks third in registration of electric vehicles

AKNISREE KARTHIK @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA is seeing a steady rise in the number of electric vehicles' (EV) registration. From 2020-21 to 2023-2024, the registration of electric vehicles witnessed a whopping 1,275% growth.

According to transport officials, Karnataka ranks third in the country in the number of electric vehicles. Uttar Pradesh tops the list, followed by Maharashtra in the second position.

From 1,922 e-vehicles in 2017-18, the number increased to 1,59,428 in 2023-2024 (till March 25). The vehicles include two-wheelers, three-wheelers and cars. In all, there are 3.4 lakh e-vehicles in the state with 2.98 lakh two-wheelers, 23,516 four-wheelers and 18,246 three-wheelers.

"When e-vehicles were introduced, there were not many takers. People were not sure of the performance of e-vehicles and were also worried about charging stations. In 2017-18, there were only 1,922 e-vehicles. Of them, 97 were two-wheelers, 1,589 three-wheelers and 236 four-wheelers. However, with the setting up of charging stations in towns and cities and many e-vehicle players in the market, the number of such vehicles increased in the state," Gnanendra Kumar, Additional Commissioner of Transport, said.

The other reasons for the jump in the number of e-vehicles are the Karnataka government is providing tax exemption to such vehicles (except the ones that cost more than Rs 25 lakh) and the environmental concern among the people.

Among the electric vehicles registered in 2023-2024, two-wheelers top the list with 1,40,327, followed by 13,667 cars and 5,434 three-wheelers.